



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**ANOTHER APPROACH TO COUNTER-TERRORISM:
TERRORISTS WITH GUILTY CONSCIENCES**

by

Ilyas Gocer

December 2012

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Michael E. Freeman
Dorothy E. Denning

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 2012		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE ANOTHER APPROACH TO COUNTER-TERRORISM: TERRORISTS WITH GUILTY CONSCIENCES			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ilyas Gocer				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) There are some cases in which terrorists had second thoughts about harming other people. Their conscience, specifically their guilty conscience, forced them to reconsider their plan. This raises thought-provoking questions: are there other examples of terrorists pulling back from an operation because of their guilty conscience, and can countries take advantage of this phenomenon to reduce the prevalence of terrorism? This thesis will answer these questions in an exploration of how exploiting guilty consciences can be an element of a country's counter-terrorism strategy that focuses on the personal, psychological component of terrorism.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Conscience, guilt, guilty conscience, terrorism, counter-terrorism, psychological approach, psychological approach to counter-terrorism			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 49	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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TERRORISTS WITH GUILTY CONSCIENCES**

Ilyas Gocer
4th Degree Chief Superintendent, Turkish National Police
B.S., Turkish National Police Academy, 1997

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2012**

Author: Ilyas Gocer

Approved by: Michael E. Freeman
Thesis Advisor

Dorothy E. Denning
Second Reader

John Arquilla
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

There are some cases in which terrorists had second thoughts about harming other people. Their conscience, specifically their guilty conscience, forced them to reconsider their plan. This raises thought-provoking questions: are there other examples of terrorists pulling back from an operation because of their guilty conscience, and can countries take advantage of this phenomenon to reduce the prevalence of terrorism?

This thesis will answer these questions in an exploration of how exploiting guilty consciences can be an element of a country's counter-terrorism strategy that focuses on the personal, psychological component of terrorism.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Arab League
AU	African Union
DEV-SOL	Revolutionary Left
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
EU	European Union
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
RAF	Red Army Faction
RMT	Resistance Movement in Turkey
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to submit my sincerest gratitude to the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP), since they provided me with an invaluable opportunity to study at the Naval Postgraduate School. I am grateful to my advisors, Michael E. Freeman, Ph.D., and Dorothy E. Denning, Ph.D. I have been able to complete this thesis with their academic guidance and insightful feedback. I am also grateful to Fathali M. Moghaddam, Ph.D., of Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., because of his invaluable input from the outset of my project in terms of the psychological aspects of my thesis research.

I want to express my cordial thanks to my wife, Ayda, who has always encouraged and supported me in times of greatest need. My precious son, Omer, and my lovely daughter, Elif Naz, have given me the motivation to complete this project. I am immensely indebted to them, and I do not know how to compensate them for their undeniable patience, understanding, and constant positive energy. I am wholeheartedly thankful to my family members who have maintained their spiritual support from my beautiful country, Turkey.

I would like to convey my special thanks to my sisters-in-law, Yenigul and Arzu, since they visited us in Monterey at a time when we really missed our family members.

My special thanks also go to my fellow countrymen colleagues and their respectful families, and to all my classmates for their sincere friendship.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In October 2010, a suicide bomber walked into a mosque in Gayan District, Paktita Province, Afghanistan. However, according to the police report, instead of blowing himself up, the would-be bomber told the people in the mosque, “I am a suicide bomber, but I’m remorseful and will not be able to detonate the bomb. I suggest you evacuate because I am going to take off my jacket.”¹

The bomb exploded while he was taking off the device, but only after the worshippers had left the mosque. What is noteworthy about this story is that the would-be suicide bomber had second thoughts about blowing other people up. His conscience, specifically his guilty conscience, forced him to reconsider his plan. This raises thought-provoking questions: are there other examples of terrorists pulling back from an operation because of their guilty conscience, and can countries take advantage of this phenomenon to reduce the prevalence of terrorism?

This thesis will answer these questions in an exploration of how exploiting guilty consciences can be an element of a country’s counter-terrorism strategy that focuses on the personal, psychological component of terrorism. This thesis will first describe what is meant by a guilty conscience through the study of various literatures. It will then show that guilty consciences can, in fact, limit the actions of terrorists by describing numerous examples. This thesis will conclude by developing strategies that states might employ to exploit guilty consciences.

On the concepts of conscience and guilt, there are large and comprehensive literatures, from “theologians, philosophers, psychologists,

¹ “Vicdan Sahibi Canli Bomba [A Conscience-Stricken Suicide Bomber],” <http://www.haberte.com/teknoloji-bilim/vicdan-sahibi-canli-bomba-h42435.html> (accessed September 26, 2012).

anthropologists, and writers of literature, as well as from psychoanalysts.”² Even though “people behave morally for different reasons,”³ everyone does so in large part because of their conscience, which is “at the heart of the mechanisms that build the behavior of a human being.”⁴

Conscience is often described as an “inner voice”⁵ or “inner witness”⁶ that “makes us aware of the difference between right and wrong, and it also determines the moral quality of our feelings, thoughts, words, and acts.”⁷ Most importantly, it “focuses on social behavior toward others.”⁸

Beyond this common understanding of conscience, religion, science, and philosophy all have their own particular views. Several different religions, for example, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, consider conscience as “a morality inherent in all humans,”⁹ and “a gift of God that represents the Law as written in their hearts, and an inner moral voice of divine origin to please God.”¹⁰ Among different religions, the conscience is identified as having “a positive character that one must do good and avoid evil.”¹¹ One scientific view of conscience holds that “the capacity for conscience is probably genetically determined; its subject matter is probably learned, or imprinted, like

² Bernard Barnett, *You Ought to! : A Psychoanalytic Study of the Superego and Conscience* (London, GBR: Karnac Books, 2007), 8.

³ Geoffrey M. Stephenson, *Development of Conscience* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1998), 1.

⁴ Jacques Pitrat, *Artificial Beings: The Conscience of a Conscious Machine* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-ISTE, 2010), 21.

⁵ Barnett, *You Ought to! : A Psychoanalytic Study of the Superego and Conscience*, 8.

⁶ Thomas Natsoulas, “Consciousness and Conscience.” *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 21, no. 4 (2000), 347.

⁷ Herant Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 142. See also *Ibid.*, 145, and Annie Reiner, *Quest for Conscience and the Birth of the Mind* (London, GBR: Karnac Books, 2009), 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹ Ninian Smart, *the World’s Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10–21.

¹⁰ Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

language, as part of a culture.”¹² Philosophically, the conscience is considered “an internal court in man before which his thoughts accuse or excuse one another”¹³ and is “the inward echo of the emotionally expressed judgments of our childhood social environment.”¹⁴

Guilt, as explained by psychologists, is “a higher order of conscience,”¹⁵ and may be “retrospective—felt after having done wrong, or it can be prospective in contemplating doing what would be wrong. It may result from acts of commission (doing the wrong thing) or omission (failing to do the right thing).”¹⁶ Sigmund Freud “has ascribed to the super-ego the function of conscience and has recognized the consciousness of guilt as an expression of a tension between ego and superego.”¹⁷

Guilt is a “self-punishment we impose on ourselves for having hurt someone.”¹⁸ According to Freud’s notion of identification, “at some critical stage in his development, the child identifies himself with other people—particularly his parents, as a consequence of his reasoning that he must act as they do, make their wishes his wishes since he is utterly dependent on them for his comfort and well-being.”¹⁹ Similarly, “if he hurts them, he hurts himself, or if he fails them, he fails himself, and he feels guilty. Other people and groups may likewise secure his loyalty and affection, and similarly induce guilt when he fails them. This factor

¹² Lars Wilhelmsson, “The Starry Heavens Above, the Moral Law Within, and Conscience,” *Vital Christianity*, <http://www.vitalchristianity.org/docs/Conscience-The%20Starry%20Heavens%20Above2.pdf> (accessed September 26, 2012).

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics and Morals* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 189.

¹⁴ Garnett A. Campbell, *Moral Concepts*, ed. Joel Feinberg (Oxford University Press, 1969), 83.

¹⁵ Stephenson, *Development of Conscience*, 2.

¹⁶ Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 22.

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology* (New York: Touchstone, 1963), 199. See also Stephenson, *Development of Conscience*, 2; Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 21.

¹⁸ Stephenson, *Development of Conscience*, 2. See also Daniel S. Drake, “Assessing Machiavellianism and Morality-Conscience Guilt,” *Psychological Reports* 77, no. 3, pt 2 (1995), 1356.

¹⁹ Stephenson, *Development of Conscience*, 2.

has sometimes been termed intro-punitive guilt to emphasize the punitive element.”²⁰ It is a child’s feeling that “he must obey because he is forced to; on the other hand, the adult may obey since he judges he ought to. The conditioned avoidance of situations which cause anxiety, guilt, shame, desire to be good—these are the factors, which are said to explain conscience since all may produce dutiful behavior.”²¹ Some psychologists argue that “sin, or contravention of the divine law would tend to increase the level of personal guilt and remorse following wrongdoing, making guilt an important factor in determining conduct.”²²

As the following section will show, terrorists are not sociopaths;²³ they all “naturally”²⁴ have a conscience “similar to other people”²⁵ and many of them, in fact, feel guilty about the acts they have committed or were about to commit. Understanding the role of the conscience will also aid in the development of psychological countermeasures that can exploit this concept.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

²² Ibid., 3.

²³ Academic research shows that although “certain psychological types of people may be attracted to terrorism, there is actually substantial evidence that terrorists are quite sane. A former PKK spokesman has even stated publicly that the PKK’s policy was to exclude psychopaths.” Hudson Rex A., *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* A Report Prepared Under an Interagency Agreement by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, September 1999).

²⁴ It is argued that “the conscience exists in the natural form in any human being.” Anders Schinkel, *Conscience and Conscientious Objections* (Amsterdam, NLD: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 229.

²⁵ Academic research shows that “96% of the human race has a conscience.” Martha Stout, *Sociopath Next Door: The Ruthless Versus the Rest of Us* (Westminster, MD: Broadway, 2005), 16.

II. CASE STUDIES

In this section, case studies of terrorist attacks—including suicide bombings—will be presented to highlight the effects of the guilty conscience. A primary source of evidence will be the perpetrators' own statements, with regard to the influence of their conscience on their decisions and actions. The data is gathered from various sources: a book, which consists of "37 case studies that include the personal statements and letters of former terrorists of different terrorist organizations;"²⁶ a dissertation, which "explores the notion of individual disengagement from political violence in Turkey;"²⁷ an article, which examines "the factors that have contributed to the end of the Red Army Faction (RAF), and places particular emphasis on the causes and characteristics of individual disengagement of RAF members from the armed struggle;"²⁸ and credible online news resources.

These cases remind us that "human beings are not natural killing machines . . . There was always an outcry from our human connectedness—there has always been the voice of conscience—reminding us that we must not kill."²⁹

A. CASE 1

A former member of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK or Kongra-Gel) expresses his feelings regarding his new identity as a suicide bomber: "I would establish a new freedom by killing lots of people. The best way to do so was to join the special unit [sacrifice (suicide bombing) teams] since I would possess the identity of a 'suicide bomber' which was a source of pride for me. My pride would

²⁶ Serdar Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim: 'Intihar Eylemcisinin Eve Donusu' [Mommy I'm Home: 'Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber']* (Eminonu, Istanbul: Karakutu, 2007), 4.

²⁷ Kamil Yilmaz, "Individual Disengagement of "Turkish Penitents" from Political Violence as Rite of Passage: Voices from the Cracks of the Social Structure" (Doctor of Philosophy, Columbia University).

²⁸ Assaf Moghadam, "Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 2 (2012), 156–181.

²⁹ Stout, *Sociopath Next Door: The Ruthless Versus the Rest of Us*, 67.

be crowned by death.”³⁰ He then describes his emotions, which are induced by his conscience: “Nonetheless, I felt terribly guilty as I saw the people were slain. Nor can any humanistic approach kill other people in order to bring peace in the world. The only thing I witnessed within the organization was the idea of killing.”³¹ As a consequence of his remorse, he decided not to commit the suicide bombing that he was ordered, and he was caught. He expressed this with: “I did not want to kill people for the freedom of others. Had I accomplished the mission I was assigned, I would have indeed destroyed the actual freedom. This was the biggest manifestation of the wrongness of their goal. Therefore, I did not commit the suicide attack.”³²

B. CASE 2

A former terrorist, who spent 15 years in a terrorist organization, had been assigned as the Regional Commander in Istanbul, Turkey. His avowal expresses how his conscience helped him question the unfairness behind the suicide bombing attack:

They make someone wear a bomb vest, send him to commit a suicide bombing, and announce that it is done for the people. This means that they disregard the people and think only about themselves. Who can give consent to the suffering of other people as a result of a bombing attack on the public service institutions?³³

As a consequence of the thoughts above, his conscience got him to “help the police capture two suicide bombing teams under his command.”³⁴

³⁰ Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim: 'Intihar Eylemcisinin Eve Donusu' [Mommy I'm Home: Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber]*, 35.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 36.

³³ Ibid., 53.

³⁴ Ibid.

C. CASE 3

A would-be suicide bomber was trained in the special unit [sacrifice (suicide bombing) teams] of the PKK, which was established to protest their leader's arrest. "He had visited his family since he wanted to see them before his death. . . . His father had requested him to 'visit his grandfather's grave before he committed whatever he planned, if he contemplated betraying his country for any reason' "³⁵ Before committing the suicide bombing, he went to visit his grandfather's grave, which is located in the Gallipoli Cemetery in Canakkale, Turkey, due to this request.

In his letter, which was written from prison, he describes the influence of his conscience on his decision.

He first underlines his concern about the location of the planned attack: "Nor is any person, who considers himself a human, able to accept committing a suicide bombing at the location that I was ordered to attack. Neither does someone ask nor do I say the location."³⁶ After pointing out the contradictions in his mind due to his conscience, he clarifies his reasoning regarding his decision:

While I was looking for a remedy because I was distressed and wanted to escape from the world, I remembered my father's request, and went to visit my grandfather's grave. It took too long to find it, but eventually I found it. I was shocked when I realized that lots of people from various regions of the country had died for this country. I cried until sunset and decided to surrender.³⁷

He then explains how his conscience got him to change his behavior after that visit:

Nor can anyone defend any fair reason with respect to the violence against civilian targets even though it is possible to justify bombing attacks in the perpetrator's mind, which is nurtured by the ideology of the organization. Who can guarantee that none of the innocent people will be harmed in a terrorist attack? Nonetheless, how your

³⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁶ Ibid., 57.

³⁷ Ibid.

conscience will not bother you when you consider the decomposed bodies, crying kids, spouses, and other family members during the funerals?³⁸

After pointing out the other factors that influenced his thoughts, he states, “Even though I and my comrades praised for fighting when we were together, these kinds of thoughts made me feel guilty when I was myself. The voice of my conscience, from the depths of my soul, always whispered and reminded me of my humanity as well as the discrepancy between our ideas and our actions”³⁹

Finally, he concludes his thoughts saying, “Now I feel intensely remorseful because I did not surrender before.”⁴⁰

D. CASE 4

The conscience of a former terrorist, “who was authorized both to commit and order the attacks since he was a senior member of the PKK,”⁴¹ got him to write the sentences below.

He first questions himself:

Whenever I question myself, I cannot understand how I became a planner or executor of the deadly attacks committed, and who made me do this. Where is the justice and the idea of freedom? Will we obtain freedom by killing innocent people? Actually, I was smart enough to realize the wrongness of whatever was being done, but I still do not know why I could not stop myself.⁴²

He then describes why he feels remorseful:

Had I not been caught or been maltreated after I have been caught, I would not have thought that I needed to fight against the people who want to divide this country. Hopefully, I am now able to think clearly. The people whom I saw as the enemy rescued me from an irrecoverable mistake. I’m happy because I’m not a killer anymore.

³⁸ Ibid., 72.

³⁹ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁴¹ Ibid., 107.

⁴² Ibid., 108.

However, I still have the pangs of remorse due to attempting such a crime.”⁴³

And then he specifies his reasons:

Nor can an organization claim to kill other people for the benefit of its people. I cannot understand the mindset that sends hundreds of suicide bombers to Turkey during the peace and democracy talks in the region. No one wishes to see the bomb explosions and slaying of the innocent people. Therefore, I’m in deep sorrow and believe that the perpetrators do not voluntarily commit the attacks. There are thousands of young Kurdish people who also think the same as I do.”⁴⁴

E. CASE 5

A former terrorist, “who served 30 years and was a member of the central committee of the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), is the author of the book, ‘Handbook of a Guerilla’, which is being distributed to the new recruits so as to explain the conditions of illegitimacy.”⁴⁵ One can read how his conscience got him to plead guilty in his letter addressed to the Counter-Terrorism Section, Istanbul Police Department. He first clarifies why he wrote the letter:

I write this letter, to describe the realities that I witnessed and paid a hefty price for, with my totally pure and unbiased sentiments that are the result of 30 years of my agonizing revolutionary life. I hope it will be beneficial to all humanity including the young people who are subject to the abuse of terrorist organizations.”⁴⁶

Besides his remorse, he also states why he joined the organization:

My revolutionary life started when I was a 17-year-old. Like many others, while I was ignoring my basic responsibilities for my own family, I was thinking that I was fighting for and on behalf of the people. I am immensely remorseful since I went back to my

⁴³ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 135.

revolutionary life after my first release from the prison. This period made me lose a lot of things from my life.”⁴⁷

After describing his painful experiences and the wrongdoings within the organization, he asks the following questions generated by his inner judge: “Which parents can keep their silence against the death of their kids? Who can send his kid to death attaching a bomb to his body? Who can watch his kids’ death within the fire?”⁴⁸ He also asks another question that gave rise to a contradiction in his mind and activated his conscience: “What kind of benefit can be expected from the persons who shout slogans in favor of their leader while a former member, who burned himself due to the pressure by his comrades since he was declared a ‘betrayal’ by virtue of refusing the ‘fasting to death’, was dying in fire?”⁴⁹ And then he lets his conscience speak: “Take an insect, pour some fuel on it, set a fire, and watch its death until the last breath. If you did not lose your humanity and have a little conscience, you cannot kill even the most harmful animal by burning.”⁵⁰

F. CASE 6

A former member of the Revolutionary Left (DEV-SOL) describes his 15-year part in the organization, and explains how his internal court changed his thoughts. He first explains what triggered his internal questioning:

I was shocked when I was caught by the police. However, this situation got me to realize the real world for a while. For that reason, I described everything apart from a few persons and incidents. Moreover, whatever the police told me during the interview has resulted in an internal questioning in my mind. What was, in fact, the way that I was following?⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 162.

He also declares both his remorse regarding the time he wasted to understand his wrongdoings and his wish in this manner:

When I was in prison, I did, on a number of occasions, evaluate my past in the organization. After questioning myself, I understood that trying to correct something by violence is beneficial only for enemies. Nonetheless, it took 15 years for me to get this point. I curse the days I spent in the organization. Nonetheless, I'm happy I got caught. I wish I had gotten caught earlier.⁵²

G. CASE 7

A former team leader of the Armed Revolutionary Troops of the DHKP/C mentions what kind of psychological and physical torture she was subject to since her fellows got suspicious about her collaboration with the police. Her remorse and wish regarding her desire to fight against terrorism can be understood from her own statements. She says, "I was grieved and depressed, and felt remorseful every day."⁵³ She also expresses her desire to fight against terrorism:

Even though it was too late, after frustrations and agonies, I have learned the realities of the organization. . . . To have been able to prevent them from harming people would have been an honorable duty and a responsibility to humanity. Nevertheless, I unfortunately acted as a stooge for a dirty and bloody game that is called "war" by a terrorist organization. I wish I were a police officer to deal with them.⁵⁴

H. CASE 8

A former member of the PKK, who engaged in violence in the rural areas for almost eight years, was caught and expressed his remorse regarding his past in the organization. He admitted, "I am ashamed of my humanity due to the attacks I committed and witnessed in the organization."⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid., 165–167.

⁵³ Ibid., 184.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 186, 190.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 213.

He then described the most despicable attack in a village. The brief story is as follows:

I realized a child, who was almost five years old, was silently crying under the blanket while we were beating a villager who we had suspected. It was obvious that he got scared. However, while we were kicking his father out, the child raised his head to see his father as though he had understood full well that they would not be able to see each other again. They caught each other's eye, and that was their last glance each other."⁵⁶

In the following sentences, he implies his remorse owing to this kind of attack: "Every night, I remember the fear in the eyes of the kids who were hugging their fathers' dead body, and ask myself whether this has to be the way to fight for the people."⁵⁷

I. CASE 9

After describing what he did on behalf of the organization and witnessed in the rural areas, a former member of the DHKP/C states how his conscience helped to prevent the organization from recruiting new people: "I was remorseful, but I had come to a point of no return . . . However, I planned to escape from the organization, and escaped after a shootout with soldiers. Consequently, I prevented the organization from using my corpse as the means of propaganda to recruit new people."⁵⁸

J. CASE 10

A former terrorist, who was reserved as a suicide bomber, describes how he got himself caught as a result of inner questioning when he realized that terrorism and violence could not be a solution. His story is as follows:

I was ready, like there's no tomorrow, to kill and to be killed. Since my leaders wanted to motivate me more, they did not deploy me for any attack when they realized that I was impatient for it. . . . After

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 222–224.

several months, they sent me a note asking whether I wanted to commit a sacrifice [suicide bombing] attack or not. I replied that I was ready for any kind of attack even though I was not ready. They gave orders to go and explode myself on the enemy's head. I would wear a bomb vest and explode myself.⁵⁹

He then expresses his remorse due to the internal contradiction he had: "My body would be broken into pieces, and I would have innocent people's blood on my hands. I was covering my face with my hands and telling myself that 'I am a despicable man'. . . . As the silence covered the night, I was talking to myself and looking for a relief."⁶⁰ As a result of his inner judgment he had decided on the right course of action: "In the early morning one day, police came to my home. Although I had a fake identity card, I gave the police the true information, and got myself caught since I realized that terrorism and violence could not be a solution for any problem. This was a step to my actual freedom."⁶¹

K. CASE 11

A news report regarding a former member of a death squad reports, "ST [confessor's nickname], who was deployed in a death squad, killed dozens of citizens, police officers, and soldiers on behalf of the PKK in the Zap and Hakurk regions, Northern Iraq. On the other hand, his confession emphasizes the influence of his conscience on him. He says, "I question my past and see the wasted period as well as the great punishment of the pangs of my conscience."⁶²

L. CASE 12

A news report regarding another terrorist attack by the PKK reports that the police caught the perpetrator of the attack, which took place two years ago when a policeman and a municipal employee were killed as a result of a remote-

⁵⁹ Ibid., 229, 231.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 232.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Eski Bir Teröristten Kan Donduran Itiraflar! [Bloodcurdling Confessions by a Former Terrorist]," <http://www.egedesonsoz.com/haber/Eski-bir-teroristten-kan-donduran-itiraflar-/799469> (accessed September 26, 2012).

controlled bomb explosion in the Catak district of Van Province, Turkey. His statement once again has revealed the actual face of the PKK. The terrorist, who placed the bomb in a trash can, stated, “After the bomb attack, I wanted to surrender to the police due to the pangs of my conscience, but I could not do so since the PKK threatened me that they would kill my family.”⁶³

M. CASE 13

Another news report regarding the confession of a former member of a bomb squad is indeed meaningful to mention as well. According to the story entitled “Bomber’s Struggle with Conscience”:⁶⁴

SY, who was a member of the PKK, was specifically trained to construct the explosive devices in Iraq. Then he was sent to Turkey to detonate explosives in various locations. He first tossed a hand grenade into the vehicle of a senior executive military officer. His second attack was during a demonstration, which was staged against the PKK. . . .

On October 28, 2007, he detonated a C-4 type explosive device, which was prepared in a camping cylinder, via remote control. Seven people were injured in that attack. . . . His last assignment was to detonate explosives within the areas of economic importance and touristic locations of Kocaeli Province, Turkey.

According to SY’s statement, “as he considered the results of a premeditated bloody act, due to the pangs of his conscience, he left the explosives in an uninhabited landscape, and prevented a massacre.”⁶⁵

SY, as reported by police, showed police officers the stores of two other electric detonators in a town of Kocaeli Province. According to the indictment, as a result of SY’s statement, two terrorists were captured and jailed because of the bomb attacks committed in Izmir Province, Turkey.

⁶³ “Bombacıdan Itiraf: Vicdan Azabi Çekiyor” [Bomber’s Confession: I Feel Remorse], <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=753151> (accessed September 26, 2012).

⁶⁴ “Bombacının Vicdan Savası” [Bomber’s Struggle with Conscience], <http://www.internethaber.com/bombacinin-vicdan-savasi-116999h.htm> (accessed September 26, 2012).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

N. CASE 14

After explaining the impacts of the group dynamics,⁶⁶ GR (nickname of the person), a former member of the Resistance Movement in Turkey (RMT), explains how a self-evaluation results an inner conflict:

After a while, you realize that what you do is indeed wrong; when you throw a Molotov cocktail on a bus, you don't think that you are burning a vehicle of the system. After a process of self-evaluation, you think that when I burn this bus in order to destroy the system, I am in reality harming my people.⁶⁷

He also emphasizes the influence of conscience in this respect:

You may relieve your conscience by saying that you are doing such acts just to expose the ugliness of the system; but this thought doesn't satisfy you. . . . If you are not strong enough to face your own conscience, you continue to follow the propaganda of the organization, which promise even higher levels for you in the system.⁶⁸

O. CASE 15

"Werner Lotze, who participated in two bank robberies, and an assassination attempt, joined the RAF in late August 1978 and killed a police officer the following month. After a shooting training, which ended with the death of one of his friends and arrest of the other one, he distanced himself from his comrades."⁶⁹ As a result of this case, "his inability to reconcile the death of his

⁶⁶ He says, "When you first join the group, your behavior is different. You try to maintain a high standard based on the group values because you want to prove yourself that you are a good revolutionary. You always try to be on the forefront in the group's actions, and you try to demonstrate the most radical of all behaviors that are asked by the group." Yilmaz, *Individual Disengagement of "Turkish Penitents" from Political Violence as Rite of Passage: Voices from the Cracks of the Social Structure*, 192.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 193. The author also emphasizes, "I found that all of my 13 informants had a behavioral change that led to their conversion from violence to non-violence. However, in addition to renouncing violence, my informants from the PKK also discarded their ideologies, felt remorse for their wrongdoings and decided to repair the damage that they have inflicted on society." Ibid., 272.

⁶⁹ Moghadam, *Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction*, 165, quoted in Tobias Wunschik, *Baader-Meinhofs Kinder: Die Zweite Generation Der RAF* (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 322.

comrades with his own worldview was apparent. 'After the shooting in Dortmund there was no more honesty, in my opinion. The murder [of the policemen in Dortmund] was readily accepted,' he said."⁷⁰ As an indication of his guilty conscience, "he thought that the death of an individual could never be morally justified."⁷¹

After a bank robbery case, the impacts of Lotze's guilty conscience can be noticed again: Lotze later told investigators that 'I can imagine that this robbery has left horrible and permanent impressions, especially on the child. All these reactions of the persons who were directly affected by my behavior showed me that all of our actions have consequences that cannot be morally justified.'⁷²

P. CASE 16

Silke Maier-Witt, who decided to abandon the RAF soon after the group robbed a bank in Zurich on 19 November 1979, left the RAF a few weeks after Lotze. She heard on the radio that a pedestrian was killed during the robbery while she was waiting for her friends. "Suddenly, 'I came to my senses,' she told investigators years later. 'I felt guilty,' she said, upon hearing of the killing of the woman. She said that she was not even relieved when her comrades returned to the apartment."⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Moghadam, *Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction*, 165.

⁷² "Lotze was also deeply affected when he saw the consequences his deeds had on others. During a bank robbery in Nuremberg, for instance, the panicked reaction of a person working at the cashier deeply disturbed him. Another man pushed aside by Lotze in the course of the robbery was similarly frightened, as was his little son." Ibid., 165, quoted in Wunschik, *Baader-Meinhofs Kinder: Die Zweite Generation Der RAF*, 322.

⁷³ "The RAF's leadership quickly decided that Maier-Witt was no longer worthy of membership in the group. She handed over her weapon—the official sign of exit from the RAF. In the summer of 1980, she was offered a new identity by the GDR, where she lived until her arrest in June 1990." Moghadam, *Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction*, 166, quoted in Wunschik, *Baader-Meinhofs Kinder: Die Zweite Generation Der RAF*, 325.

Q. CASE 17

Jürgen Ponto, who was a Deutsche Bank official, was godfather to one of Susanne Albrecht's sisters. Albrecht, who was a former member of the RAF, "was granted membership in the group primarily because of her ability to 'open the door' to Ponto's [target person] apartment. Her family relationship afforded the RAF an easy entry into the house. Ponto was killed by the RAF in his own home. After his death, Albrecht realized what she had done and became utterly depressed."⁷⁴ In this case, she realized her wrongdoing, and thus, her guilty conscience made her depressed.

R. CASE 18

Umar P., on trial for his alleged role in the 2002 Bali bombings, expressed his deep remorse over the terror attack: "I felt so upset and guilty when I saw the bomb killed many people. I said to [the attackers] that it was my last involvement in this kind of activity,"⁷⁵ he told the West Jakarta District Court.

According to his statement, the bomb, which was detonated on October 12, 2002, was not due to his active involvement since he had been strongly against the idea: "I mixed only 50kg of chemicals, compared to the remaining 950kg prepared by others, and I did so with reluctance. The plot was 'against my conscience,'"⁷⁶ he said, reiterating his earlier expressions of regret.

S. CASE 19

A would-be female suicide bomber, Tawriya H., 25, was arrested when her role in the plan of a bomb attack was revealed. According to her statement, she refused to kill Israeli civilians when her Palestinian leaders wanted her to

⁷⁴ Moghadam, *Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction*, 167.

⁷⁵ Elisabeth Oktofani, "Patek: Bali Bombings were Against My Conscience," Khabar Southeast Asia, http://khabarsoutheastasia.com/en_GB/articles/apwi/articles/features/2012/05/31/feature-03 (accessed October 28, 2012).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

have her hair loose, wear tight and sexy clothes, and sunglasses although it is against her religion.

In addition, in relation to impacts of her guilty conscience, she insisted that “she also had second thoughts about the righteousness of the planned attack: ‘I started thinking that I would be killing babies, women and sick people, she said. [I] imagined what it would be like if my family were sitting in a restaurant and someone bombed them.’”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Dave Goldiner, “Conscience made Woman Reluctant,” NY Daily News, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2002-05-31/news/18187441_1_female-suicide-suicide-bomber-israeli (accessed October 28, 2012).

III. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The guilty conscience can be used as an element of a counter-terrorism strategy that focuses on the personal, psychological component of terrorism. Personal statements of former members of different terrorist organizations—such as the PKK, DHKP/C, DEV-SOL, RMT, and RAF—were examined as case studies. The more the conscience is developed, the greater chance that terrorism can be prevented.

When the effectiveness of the guilty conscience was analyzed through the case studies, it is obvious that each perpetrator's conscience increased his/her guilty feelings, particularly if s/he was involved or witnessed cruel and/or bloody attacks. In many cases, their guilty conscience made them stop their wrongdoings.

This mechanism, the guilty conscience, is of great importance in terms of a psychological approach to counter-terrorism. Academics not only point out “prevention as the best long-term policy against terrorism”⁷⁸ but also “emphasize the importance of psychological methods,”⁷⁹ which can be “applied to the counter-terrorism strategies, particularly in terms of obstructing and impeding terrorist functioning.”⁸⁰ On the other hand, they also recognize the fact that “authorities cannot eliminate the threat [of terrorism] entirely.”⁸¹ Bearing this in mind, terrorism cannot be eradicated completely, yet can be prevented to some extent. The idea here is that “the wider the scale of psychological intervention, the greater the benefit.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Fathali Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration,” *American Psychologist* (February-March 2005), 161–169.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Mark E. Koltko-Rivera and P. A. Hancock, *Psychological Strategies for the Defense Against Terrorism* NATO R&T Organization, [10/25/2004].

⁸¹ M. Crenshaw, *Terrorism: What's Coming the Mutating Threat*, ed. J. O. Ellis III (Oklahoma: Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), 2007), 19–27.

⁸² Koltko-Rivera and Hancock, *Psychological Strategies for the Defense Against Terrorism*, 10.

In addition, academics argue, “given the potential backlash challenges posed by policies based on proactive strategies,”⁸³ “the biggest challenge is developing a counterterrorism strategy that causes as little harm as possible.”⁸⁴ In this context, considering the importance of human rights and other democratic values, if “the ultimate goal is to eradicate terrorism,”⁸⁵ the strategies developed based on the guilty conscience will be more advantageous, in terms of “minimizing the damage caused”⁸⁶ by terrorism, compare to the conventional “proactive strategies.”⁸⁷

A human being is involved in every stage of terrorism as either a member or a possible recruit or a victim. Therefore, whatever the level of or the reason for the terroristic action, the methods developed that are compatible with the common psychological mechanisms at the individual level will likely be more effective in countering terrorism in the long term. The conscience can be considered a common mechanism⁸⁸ and an accessible means to exploit⁸⁹ in countering terrorism.

⁸³ COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management, *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism”* *Transnational Terrorism, Security, & the Rule of Law*, [19 October 2007].., 27, quoted in T. Sandler, “Collective Versus Unilateral Responses to Terrorism,” *Public Choice* 124, no. 1–2 (2005), 75–93.

⁸⁴ *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism,”* 27.

⁸⁵ “The goal of eliminating terrorism is grounded in the desire to eradicate the adversary by removing the incentive to commit terrorist acts and use violence. In other words, the destruction of a terrorist organization is the ultimate goal, albeit perhaps one of limited probability. Ibid., 6, quoted in B. Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle. A Guide for Decision Makers* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 26.

⁸⁶ “Minimizing damage caused by terrorism may include efforts to reduce the number of future attacks or prevention of certain types of attacks such as suicide bombings or mass killings. A decrease in the amount of damage done to property and infrastructure may also be of relevance.” *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism,”* 6.

⁸⁷ “Sandler’s understanding of proactive measures is the targeting of terrorists and their supporters with the aim of weakening the ability of the enemy to operate and subsequently reducing the occurrence of attacks.” Ibid., 6, quoted in Sandler, *Collective Versus Unilateral Responses to Terrorism*, 75.

⁸⁸ Academic research shows that “96% of the human race has a conscience.” Stout, *Sociopath Next Door: The Ruthless Versus the Rest of Us*, 16.

Another important point to consider is that the period when the conscience develops and the age of recruitment into terrorist organizations overlap. Psychologists argue, “The conscience develops during childhood and can be shaped during the adolescence according to the social, psychological, and moral values of the environment in which the person grows up.”⁹⁰ There is also some evidence that “new members of terrorist organizations are recruited at younger and younger ages, and adolescents and preteens are often receptive to terrorist recruitment.”⁹¹ At this stage, the authorities should recognize that “children and youth”⁹² oriented strategies, which focus on conscience development, will likely provide long-term solutions to terrorism.

Research shows, with respect to the impacts of guilty conscience, that “all of the informants [former terrorists], who have been studied, had a behavioral change that led to their conversion from violence to non-violence. However, in addition to renouncing violence, they also discarded their ideologies, ‘felt remorse for their wrongdoings, decided to repair the damage that they have

⁸⁹ Exploiting the accessible means to counter terrorism is crucial since “there is a shortage of theories on how to combat it due to the lack of an internationally accepted definition and relative absence of concrete, agreed-upon theories of terrorism as a phenomenon.” *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism,”* 5.

⁹⁰ Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 139–146. See also Lawrence Kohlberg, “Stages and Aging in Moral Development—Some Speculations,” *The Gerontologist* 13, no. 4 (1973), 497–502; Sandor Rado, “The Automatic Motivating System of Depressive Behavior” *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 2, no. 5 (1961), 252–253.

⁹¹ Rex A., *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 48.

⁹² “In many armed conflicts the soldiers involved are children under 15 and often these children are forcibly recruited. Commanders target and recruit children because they are readily available, easy to terrorize and manipulate, and provide an excellent source of free labor. . . In addition, they are not generally suspected. Under the presumption of innocence, a child may more easily conceal himself among the population. Employing children as perpetrators of suicide attacks is an even more effective instrument of psychological warfare than using an adult attacker.” UNAMA, *Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001–2007)* United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 9 September, 2007).

inflicted on society,⁹³ and consequently helped state authorities in their fight with terrorist organizations.”⁹⁴

Moreover, the guilty conscience will help “psychologically undermine terrorism.”⁹⁵ A former terrorist’s statement, in this respect, reveals a significant point of consideration regarding the impact of the guilty feelings of a terrorist and of questioning the actions: “They [the leaders] know that if a member starts questioning, and feels remorse, it marks the beginning of the end of the group. Such examples of questioning usually brought about ‘separations.’⁹⁶ In fact, this is a good thing for the state; because groups cannot explain their wrongdoings to their own members.”⁹⁷

In this context, local-, state- (governmental), regional-, and international-level strategies can be developed that take into account the religious,

⁹³ “The painful feelings like guilt alert us that there is something amiss in our lives and relationships that must be set right. The person in midst of a guilt experience often feels a press to confess, apologize, or make amendments for the bad deed that was done. This is, without question, an unpleasant emotion. Therefore, the person remains ready to take reparative action to the extent that circumstances allow. It motivates people to admit responsibility for their wrong actions, to confess, to make amends and repair damaged relationships.” Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 4, 25, 75.

⁹⁴ “They offered to state officials their insider knowledge not only about their own groups but also other terrorist groups and their relationships with the actors of the deep-state. This issue is important in the sense that such information provided by the repentant persons (who like to be called ‘anonymous state witnesses’ to differentiate themselves from ‘confessors’), most of whom were former members of terrorist organizations, became crucial in the processes of unmasking of the Turkish deep-state, and thereby opened a new page in the country’s efforts towards the establishment of an advanced democracy.” Yilmaz, *Individual Disengagement of “Turkish Penitents” from Political Violence as Rite of Passage: Voices from the Cracks of the Social Structure*, 8, 237, 272, 323–324.

⁹⁵ “Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, whose *The Art of War* continues to inform political-military strategy after 2,000 years, observes, ‘To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.’ In effect, he is advocating psychological undermining of the enemy, a prescription still valid today.” Jerrold M. Post, “Psychological Operations and Counterterrorism,” *Joint Force Quarterly: JFQ*, no. 37 (Second Quarter 2005), 105. See also Curtis D. Boyd, “ARMY IO is PSYOP Influencing More with Less” *Military Review* (May-June 2007), 71.

⁹⁶ “Terrorist groups seem to regard dissent as a more severe threat than exit; it is equated with treason and is as divisive because it questions the accepted reasoning and leadership of the group.” Gavin Cameron, “Terrorism: Psychological and Instrumental Approaches,” in *Nuclear Terrorism: A Threat Assessment of the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 45. See also the Case 17 (Maier-Witt).

⁹⁷ Yilmaz, *Individual Disengagement of “Turkish Penitents” from Political Violence as Rite of Passage: Voices from the Cracks of the Social Structure*, 198.

sociological, psychological, and cultural aspects of the development of conscience. In light of this, the guilty conscience can and should contribute to counter-terrorism efforts.

There are several ways in which the relevant authorities can apply this knowledge:

- 1) *At the local level*, local institutions can develop various projects. For instance,
 - The Department of Education can initiate a training⁹⁸ project on the subject of conscience-development techniques, or can adopt a curriculum framework for instructional materials in conscience development for preschool, elementary school, and high school students. Additionally, community training centers can provide training for parents, particularly for mothers,⁹⁹ to explain how to develop their children's conscience.
 - The Department of Civil Affairs, in order to collect the narratives for media use, can provide cooperation with non-governmental organizations to arrange visits to the families of victims, to the survivors of terrorist attacks, or to former terrorists.

⁹⁸ "A matured conscience is the product of experience, of training, and of wise education. An effective way to help develop conscience is by teaching the ancient cardinal virtues—which are the 'real' core values." James H. Toner, "Ordinary Sense and Understanding" Air War College JSCOPE XX, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C, January 1998).
<http://isme.tamu.edu/JSCOPE98/TONER98.HTM>.

⁹⁹ "Mothers are more cited than fathers in inducing guilt in their children." Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience*, 36. Another research also shows that "Mother-child mutually responsive orientation at toddler and preschool ages predicted children's future conscience, even after controlling for the developmental continuity of conscience. Model-fitting analyses revealed that mutually responsive orientation at toddler age had a direct effect on future conscience, not mediated by such orientation at preschool age. The findings extend those of earlier work that revealed the importance of mother-child mutually responsive orientation for socialization, and they confirm the value of the relationship approach to social development, including long-term outcomes." Grazyna Kochanska and Kathleen T. Murray, "Mother-Child Mutually Responsive Orientation and Conscience Development: From Toddler to Early School Age," *Child Development* 71, no. 2 (Mar.–Apr., 2000), 417–431.

- The Department of Media Affairs can launch TV programs and radio programs pertaining to the experience of survivors¹⁰⁰ to alert the conscience of the audience group, or of repentant former terrorists, to emphasize the impact of their conscience in stopping their wrongdoings. The department can also televise momentary advertisements (like 10-second traffic awareness ads) to increase the awareness of the guilty conscience within the public.
- The Department of Religious Affairs can encourage sermons¹⁰¹ about the guilty conscience. This will be a good step particularly against religiously motivated terrorism.
- The Department of Justice can initiate conscience-oriented programs in the prisons to evoke the conscience of the prisoners in order to prevent reengagement to terrorism.
- The Department of Defense, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, can print posters, handbills, pamphlets, leaflets, and flyers, which will capture the imagination of the intended population. The Department can also circulate these items within the areas—including the safe havens in the mountainous terrains—of potential support or recruitment in order to influence the consciences of members, advocates, and sympathizers of terrorist organizations by prompting pity on the victims of terrorism.
- The Department of Social Affairs can initiate conscience-oriented projects for “orphans and children who are separated from their parents, caregiver, or community. These children frequently join armed groups to gain security, food, etc., since they may lack a

¹⁰⁰ Academics argue, “Counterterrorism specialists should effectively use narratives in combating terrorism by telling a better story or creating alternative exemplars that do not advocate violence.” *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism,”* 18.

¹⁰¹ It is suggested that “One of the ways for countering terrorism is engaging the community and building platforms in which moderate clerics can preach tolerance.” *Ibid.*, 8.

home and basic means of support.”¹⁰² The projects related to the development of their conscience will help stop terrorists from recruiting children.

- 2) At *the state level*, governments can enact convenient rules and regulations to enhance the capacity of local institutions in terms of their programs, plans, and projects in relation to the development of conscience. They can also provide cooperation between local institutions and non-governmental organizations as well as media.
- 3) At *the regional level*; regional alliances, and intergovernmental alliances such as the European Union (EU), the Arab League (AL), the African Union (AU), and others can provide legal and economic support for local governments to develop their initiatives in this respect.
- 4) At *the international level*, in addition to the freedom of conscience¹⁰³, international organizations and institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) can adopt legal provisions that stipulate the arrangement of required rules and regulations with regard to the development of conscience. They can also initiate projects, similar to aforementioned local level proposals, in their respective mission areas.

As “there are numerous scattered theories on counter-terrorism,”¹⁰⁴ focusing on the guilty conscience as a psychological approach can be productive and pioneer a new methodology for formulating counter-terrorism measures, and

¹⁰² *Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001–2007)*, 107.

¹⁰³ UN General Assembly, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights “<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> (accessed September 17, 2012). See also UN General Assembly, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (16 December 1966) “<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDA106BF303C3CEE85256368005960A0> (accessed September 17, 2012).

¹⁰⁴ *Theoretical Treatise on Counter-Terrorism Approaches “An Ethically Just, Comprehensive European Strategy Against Terrorism,”* 23.

because “terrorism is a moral problem with psychological underpinnings,”¹⁰⁵ the guilty conscience can be exploited as a moral solution to the terrorism phenomenon.

¹⁰⁵ “Terrorism is a moral problem with psychological underpinnings; the challenge is to prevent disaffected youth and others from becoming engaged in the morality of terrorist organizations. A lesson from the history of terrorism is that this moral problem does not have a technological solution; this lesson is at odds with the contemporary tendency to try to find technological solutions to moral dilemmas. More sophisticated technology and increased military force will not end terrorism in the long-term.” Moghaddam, *The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration*, 168.

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